

**Tonci Kuzmanic:**

### **Troubles with Post-socialism or why capitalism is not the same as democracy**

It might appear, though only on the face of it, that our present questioning of why we fought and what we fought for in the 1980s is superfluous. The problem lies in the fact that this question has not been posed for quite some time now, especially as those who create and sustain the spiritual climate today are not only evading this question (it is not in their interest), but they cannot raise it at all. The reason is quite simple: they cannot raise this question because when the things were happening "for real", or rather, when we fought for democracy, they were nowhere to be found. "Nowhere" is here used conditionally. I would not like it to be understood as some "no-place". My "nowhere" suggests that today's "leading figures" (ideological and party leaders, business top dogs) at that time either held high positions in socialist companies or at the university, or they were - and this goes for the majority of today's leading "democrats", no matter whether social, liberal, Christian or other - safely anchored in some social or national (socio-political) institution, that is to say, self-management institution. Only later, when the situation "opened up" and democracy was already "functioning", and particularly when it became evident which way the wind was blowing, that is, when it was clear who was going to "win", did they raise their flags of courage and turn into fervent advocates of democracy, liberalism, capitalism, freedom and whatever else - notions that over time turned into a cacophony more or less devoid of any meaning.

However, for the political generation and the relatively small intellectual activist community that in the 1980s gathered around the New Social Movements (NSM) and Civil Society (CS), the question of what we actually fought for in the 1980s is of fateful significance, as it is for our society in general and other post-socialist societies. Its fatefulness arises from the fact that it represents the "to be or not to be" of democracy, and with it the quality of life in general!

Why is this so? Because if we, who in the eighties were aware that we were primarily fighting a political battle for democracy, political freedom and equality, and a state governed by law, had let go of the political and social charge of yesterday's endeavors, we could easily slip into some innocent self-evidence that is harmless solely at first glance. If we keep on being silent about our achievements and their significance, it could appear that the motives for our struggle were utilitarian, that we strove for benefits, profit, privileges, economy and enterprise, liberalism, and finally capitalism. We, who criticized socialism and self-management, who promoted democracy and worked for it at the time when such activity implied certain elementary courage and represented a conspicuous form of risky social and political engagement, must now clearly articulate the ideas we emphasized in the past: that we stood and still stand for democracy, for political pluralism, political freedom and political (not just social) equality, that we were, and still are, anything but pro-capitalist! Capitalism was neither our ideal nor a prerequisite starting point for the criticism of socialist self-management, that is, socialism in general. The extremely ideologized dichotomy between capitalism and socialism (dating from the mid 19th century at least and most exploited during the Cold War process of demonisation) taken as explanatory matrix meant nothing to us. The standpoints from which we made public speeches and talked about civil society and new social movements, and especially about the rehabilitation of politics (in which political activity plays an emphasized role) without which, mark this well, democracy is

unimaginable let alone practicable, was indeed pointed against socially rigid self-management (as a matter of fact this was the natural environment of the political generation of that time), yet it was just as much pointed against the very binary ideological matrix of socialism-capitalism. In short, by calling in democracy we by no means meant capitalism or liberalism, as some would like to think. In contrast to the avalanche of anti-political and chauvinist narrow-mindedness that prevailed towards the end of the 1980s and turned into a storm of chauvinist and even racist "consciousness" which gained even greater impetus in the 1990s, we both theoretically and empirically recognized and fully comprehended the meaning of various capitalisms and liberalisms which did not have the faintest idea of either democracy or politics, not to mention political equality or freedom of political activity. Such social "systematisms" represented anything but the ideals on which we wanted to model our dreams or direct our political activities towards. When I say political activities I do not have in mind political activity in the sense used by post-socialist and politically uneducated individuals, who equate it with their work for various political parties as was the extremely widespread practice in the 1990s.

Whatever the case, there are many reasons why NSM and CS, as political paradigms par excellence, were distorted, with the result that the successors of NSM became more or less corrupted anti-political alliances called political parties, and the vacated ideological habitat of civil society was colonized by a combination of privately owned, ultimately profit-driven, primarily self-interested and chauvinist owners' associations and Mafia organizations. While some of the reasons for this can be attributed to the anti-political social discourse of the very protagonists of the new social movements in the 80s, the major ingredients of this shameful stew were contributed by the uncritical mass of the stay-at-homes who filled the already established public and political space, and re-defined (for which one should read: annulled) it in an extremely reckless manner. The course of the re-definition/annulling political (and not "the social") processes of the 80s was and still is complex and difficult to explain. To put it schematically, we have the following stages: first, the re-definition of the political struggle of the 1980s in the direction of (socially grasped/"social fundamentalism") liberalism, followed by reshaping it in the direction of the national consciousness developing process, which in the course of subsequent developments turned into a kind of self-evident, self-explaining struggle for our own state which was understood as a liberal, national-capitalistic community, or rather a big family/Nation business in a precious romantic sense of Toennies's *die Gemeinschaft*. All of this eventually brought us to the present, banal, post-socialist, late capitalist day-to-day grind, which literally poses a threat to the level of democracy achieved in the eighties. The deconstruction of the political pluralism of the 1980s that led to the duality of the 1990s, even on the level of the majority voting system, then chauvinist conscious behavior of the Constitutional Court and similar "intellectual phenomena", can evolve solely from the events or processes suggested above and can be understood in connection with them only. In this paper I will attempt to delineate some elements of the genesis of the transition from the political praxis of civil society as it was in the 1980s, into poiesis of the post-socialist late capitalism of the 1990s.

## **I The anti-political role of post-socialist liberalism**

It is rather simple to identify the main course of ideological-conceptual transition, which at that time was obvious to relatively few. For the large part of the cultural community, sociologists' circles, and especially for the nationally conscious Catholic community, this "transition" was not at all discernible. Moreover they do not want to admit its existence up to date. The process was, however, obvious to those of us who had a clear understanding of the concepts of politics and

political activity. "Us" here comprises individuals who in some way had already done away with the dominant blind spot of social sciences( Kuzmanic: 1996) in Slovenia whose precise definition would be "systematic anti-politics". Of course, the transition I am talking about is, if I may use a somewhat simplified explanation, the transition from the paradigm of democracy into the paradigm of capitalism which coincided with the transition from the 1980s into the 1990s. The decisive component of the ideological *pons asinorum* which made possible the barely perceptible slip from one into the other seemingly identical notion (the two are identical only at first glance, be it sociological or ideological glance), was the ideological paradigm named - for reasons and tendencies still not quite explained - liberalism. The non-place earned by the previously successful, contrapuntal, negative concept of civil society was comfortably settled by self-sufficient and self-presented liberalism which was a priori and entirely non-reflectively perceived as "positive" without any further designations. On the surface it appeared as positive only with regard to the "right-wing threats" and "wrong courses", but in fact this supposed "positivity" first did away with the "outdated" concept (this gave rise to the label "nostalgia" that sticks to NSM and CS) of a political democratic struggle that was enacted by the new social movements and civil society. Only the politically illiterate could overlook the fact that the leading ideologists of liberalism in Slovenia took to "settling accounts" with the new social movements and civil society before doing anything else. This became especially obvious during the first democratic elections when the remnants of new social movements appeared as the "Independent List of New Social Movements". This form of cleaning up the 1980s scene and the production of orthodox liberals was necessary to make way first for liberalism and then, through the mentioned intermediary stages, for capitalism. Moreover, it made possible the removal of unwanted/redundant "left-wingers" and "political unrealists" while at the same time enabling retroactive appropriation of the entire history of the 1980s and the re-definition of the whole decade turning it into the history of liberals and liberalism .

In short, civil society's political fight for democracy and new social movements were systematically sucked up and neutralized by Slovenian liberalism (Slovenian liberals) and not by the right-wing parties. Similarly, it did not melt away because of the fatigue of the promoters/representatives of civil society, as is sometimes taken to be self-evident and plausible. The cost of the liberal-national transition into Slovenian "reality and stability" of the 1990s, which has never been understood as a "transition", but as a natural stage of development and a "given position/state", has to date been questioned only by few . Perhaps the reason is that the final account has not been presented yet, but the date of payment for the "best possible reality" and "most adequate reality" (which, of course, is "liberal") seems to be approaching: it is written out by the phenomenon we could also name Janšism .

With the help of liberalism almost everyone "turned liberal" literally overnight. Yet this is only one, admittedly more obvious side of the coin: the other, more important, reveals that exactly because of the "soft transition" into liberalism many fighters for democracy as of yesterday swallowed the bait en masse and became pro-capitalists. When looking for the reasons that contributed to the abrupt emergence of liberalism in Slovenia, the atmosphere prevailing in the 80s should certainly be mentioned among the first. It is true that this atmosphere was implicitly understood as "liberal", but we should not overlook the fact that only those that were not directly involved could arrive at such a conclusion. In other words, such an understanding was characteristic of the observers of the developments (not the protagonists) who were the prisoners of the self-management rhetoric so they concluded that "liberalism" must have been the most suitable designation for what was happening before their eyes. To put it differently, the label "liberalism" most suited those mind

sets that were beginning to retreat from self-management. Therefore, liberalism as an "intermediary" or "third" way appeared like a commonsense, even natural (in the literal sense of the word) alternative to self-management socialism and the chauvinist right wing lying in wait.

With the exception of nationally conscious conservative circles that mostly gathered around New Review, who indeed occasionally referred to liberalism, NSMs and CS never saw liberalism as their desired ideology.

(Kaj to pomeni???...) After all, this was the time when the highly appealing whiff of money and power, and the allure of the promised land of political power were hovering in the air, and with it also opportunities for personal profit. To this category of participants such palpable benefits were saying that democracy, liberalism and capitalism were in fact "one and the same thing". Even more than that! Political ignorance and a priori rejection of self-management (which is only the reverse side of being anchored a priori in the socialist system), suggested to them that actually there was no point in "looking for new paths", that we were fed up with "innovations" anyway as a result of the self-management era, there was no point in reinventing the wheel, so the task was in fact very simple: all one had to do was poke into the treasures of history and the developed world and copy some randomly selected constitution (any liberal constitution would do), transplant "verified patterns" and avoid, as much as possible, insignificant domestic experience, especially political experience that was shaped through hard democratic struggle of the opposition during the 1980s. In short, what we have here is the period in which "to be liberal" meant to be Good: liberalism became a seam that ran through all of the struggles of civil society and new social movements and capitalized them.

## **II "My Country" = democracy?**

In any case, at the beginning of the 1990s the line of reasoning of the creators of the public opinion and the public itself - mind here that the public was parroting whatever the creators of public opinion poured forth through the mass media - ran something to this effect: since in the eighties we fought for democracy, we rightfully earned "our own country". And since now we have our own country we therefore also have democracy. The logical conclusion was that fighting for democracy is like fighting to establish one's own country, so naturally, once you have it you no longer have to struggle for it or for democracy. Once we have some thing, it does not have to be reiterated. This brings to mind the image of us arriving in some Eldorado, a land of opportunities (my country at last), where by definition everything that happens can only be good or the best. For what bad thing can happen to the Nation which finally has its own country and democracy? The post-socialist fetish called the nation state here went so far that local political idiots (in the Greek sense of the word), put it into words as follows: "A nation without a country is like a shit in the rain!". In the aforementioned Eldorado, the country of open and best possible opportunities, all that people have to do is tend their own garden. In short, the new Slovenian group portrait with democracy suggested that there was no more need to think or act, all we have to do is persist, work and create. And what else beside working and creating is left, once activity (especially political) is unwanted or even publicly lynched? What else can we do but create/make goods and people using non-socialist or rather capitalist methods?

In other words, the period of activity, especially political and social activity (the 1980s) in Slovenia was succeeded by the era dominated by the engineers of souls who set up their workshops, offices or cathedras and put up for sale their "spiritual", "democratic" (read: neo-capitalist) junk. The moment democracy was turned into the product of domestic Slovenian intellect (something

similar happened in other post-socialist countries), when it became a frozen clot called Slovenia (= "my country"), new social movements and civil society which were devoted to democracy, political equality, civil society, a citizens' state and human rights, were literally and metaphorically placed in parenthesis. They became a "frozen clot" which the great spirits of Slovenian domesticity could delight in when they had to refer to their "own illustrious history" of the 1980s. Only later did this locally oriented intellect recognize that the establishment of post-socialist capitalism bypassing democracy creates a situation which also has another rather brutal side. We may use that other side to explain the phenomenon called the "Slovenian Spring" whose translation for uninitiated readers would be the radical Slovenian right wing, parallel to that of Haider in Austria.

The race for capitalism from positions on the right was more natural, since there was no need to bridle or destroy illusions about democracy. To put it another way, right-wingers did not have to overcome the obstacles presented by NSM and CS as did Slovenian (neo)liberals. Here the events relied on a more brutal ideologem, that is Blut&Boden, which means that they exploited domesticity that was most often understood as Heidegger's Care (e.g. Care about "identity") or was simply related through the ostensibly "intellectual talk". The golden mean was easily found: the concept of communism had to be inverted to obtain a correct, positive model, that is capitalism. All that was needed was a speck of liberalism and left-wingers were ready to join in. This consensus of the center actually began to function fully (as a direct ruling power) quite soon through the "coalition" of parties which persisted until very recently when power was overtaken by radical right-wingers gathered around Janez Janša through parliamentary maneuvering.

Let us recapitulate: only after NSM and CS, who were sincerely devoted to democracy and political equality, were either clandestinely or conspicuously excluded from the history of the 1980s, and especially after all networks and infrastructure that were painstakingly pieced together for the whole decade were removed, was it possible to reduce history to the activity of "genius" (read: chauvinist oriented) people and a handful of events popularly known as Cankarjev Dom, the Prosecution of the Four and such like. The defeat of democracy from the 1980s - this is the central thesis of this paper - which is to say, the defeat of the political struggle for equality, the reduction of activist citizens' work to the routine operation of state officials, and the "plunge" into (neo)capitalism of the post-socialist type, opened doors to hypocrisy. The so-called "deserving people" began to bloom like mushrooms after the rain. Exactly that which Plato named timocracy in his Politeia when describing the struggle of soldiers for the post-war redemption of yesterday's merits, is a part of the phenomenon which I named Janšism at the beginning of the 1990s, and which was made possible, at least indirectly even though with much fervor, by Slovenian liberals.

The above is the approximate evolution of the things that brought us to the edge of the bad present, which will in the near future bear its real fruits that will be anything but attractive or good. All events rested and still rest on an implicit or explicit chain of equations which implies democracy=liberalism=capitalism meaning "all of this is in fact one and the same thing".

### **III. Why capitalism is not the same as democracy**

In this essay I will attempt to break this chain by presenting some elements of possible methods of differentiation between democracy and capitalism. In doing this I will support the hypothesis that democracy and capitalism are anything but one and the same thing, in contrast with what is apparently believed in post-socialist Slovenia and other Central and East European countries, which also serves as the basis for the ideological legality and legitimacy of post-socialism. My

reasons for doing this are basically political: if we do not make such a differentiation, which can be based only on the experience of the defeat in the 1980s (the role of liberalism in this process), the best we can hope for is technical-political scrambling inside a structure composed of political parties, or we can indulge in the passion for accumulation and scrambling for money. The latter has not become only the most popular national sport, but it also seems to be the main characteristic of the present form of social interaction and mentality. Judging by past experience, without such differentiation even potential civilian initiatives are doomed to remain feeble and at the mercy of the proverbial narrow-mindedness of this conservative environment. In other words, it is my aim in the first place to rehabilitate politics and democracy, to point out and suggest that post-politics, post-democracy and post-socialism, which make our reality here and now, must be confronted on all levels no matter whether they originate from the left, the center, or the right. Instead of innocuously taking them as self-evident, we should show that the principles on which they are based are disputable and should bring them to recognize the value of individual and collective political action without which little will remain of democracy in Slovenia and elsewhere .

Schematically speaking, the differentiation between capitalism and democracy can be approached in more than one way. For the purpose of this short essay I have chosen a method of simplistic and dual argumentation. I will first try to give an "objective" definition of both concepts and then approach them from a subjective viewpoint. Let's start with capitalism. One of the less controversial and widely accepted definitions of capitalism holds that capitalism is above all an economic and to a lesser degree a social system which unites privately owned production companies that compete among themselves in order to create profit. The "private" part of the definition emphasizes that production means are not state-owned, so competition includes both producers and consumers, while the profit arises from the very mechanism of creating surplus from sales with regard to investments. This definition enables us among other things to completely leave out state intervention, so that it encompasses both early capitalism (*laissez-faire*) and late capitalism (interventionist). This definition calls for an additional explanation, namely that private ownership implies that supreme control over execution and the property itself is in the "hands" of the capital and not of labor, because without such a safety valve our definition could open door to concepts such as the socialization of the market, market socialism or similar, all of which belong to a different story.

With democracy, however, things are different on the "objective level" too. In this case we have a political systematization in the first place (to a lesser degree a social system, and lesser still an economic system - "economic democracy") which brings together the elements of "institutions" ("state governed by law and order", parliament, equality before the law...), "rituals" (such as, elections), and individual or collective political activities which range from active and voting rights, through writing, shouting, silence and complaining, to "basic human rights, political equality, rights to assemble". Whatever way you put it, in contrast to the privacy of capitalism (property), democracy is above all connected with the public; or, to put it differently, in general it is not connected with labor or production (of goods or people), but with either activity or non-activity.

Starting from the "subjective" viewpoint, the difference may be located with the help of, conditionally speaking, the difference between the subject of democracy on the one side, and the subject of capitalism on the other. The core of democracy does not revolve around the apparatus called "nation/people" that was introduced into modern discourse by national revolutions, but around two different concepts, that of a citizen and the sovereignty of a citizen/state. There is no democracy without citizens and the sovereignty of citizens and state, whereby the sovereignty of

citizens and the sovereignty of the state are complementary and mutually conflicting (civil society, new social movements) . On the other hand, it seems easiest to define capitalism using the concepts of production and sales. The central subject of capitalism is therefore neither the citizen nor the state, but one of the many "incarnations of man" at best, namely the one which functions exactly within the sphere that ignores citizenship. In our times this form of appearance of man is most often (justifiably) called "the consumer" (occasionally, but more rarely - the producer). If we continue with the schematic description, we could say that the subject of democracy is the citizen, and the subject of capitalism is the producer. The subjectivity and legitimacy of a citizen is shaped through the public activity or non-activity, and the subjectivity of a producer through private production (labor/production) or non-production.

A step away from this schematic definition adapted to fit the limited scope of this paper leads us to the recognition that the conditions of existence and activity, as well as the needs of the two mentioned creatures, that is, the citizen and the consumer, are set rather far apart. The essential difference, which could soon evolve into the most painful conflict of the contemporary time, if it has not done so yet, can be most easily explained on the basis of the relationships between these two subjects and the state. If it is true that a citizen constitutes, presupposes, maintains and sustains the state, it is possible to say that a consumer acts in precisely the opposite way on this general level. Any state, every border or limit, and especially political ones, invariably represent an obstacle to a consumer. Therefore, if the citizen creature is per definitionem state-formative, the consumer creature, who is the pillar of capitalism (especially of late capitalism), is state-disintegrative. As much as the former is a political being, the latter is anti-political. While the ideals of a citizen revolve around political freedom, political equality and political pluralism (which may be realized only within some political space defined and demarcated by the constitution), the "smell of material goods" and eventually of money, which represent the ultimate form of satisfying one's desire for power, literally propel the consumer beyond these limits and moreover press him/her to eliminate them (the so-called globalization process). Another very important thing separates these different and only occasionally overlapping worlds of the citizens and the consumers. While the notion of a citizen implies political equality and freedom of political action as conditions of his/her existence, meaning that every possible form of citizenship is realized outside the areas of money and power, the notion of a consumer implies that equality in nuce is an obstacle, if not redundancy even. A "proper" consumer is without exception defined by means of some surplus value: he is the richest, the best, the most refined, the most successful or the most powerful. On the other hand, an "honest", "good", "proper" citizen is deprived even on the level of sintagma, since all of the above collocations evoke some hardly imaginable concepts. To be for democracy, which from its very beginning in ancient Greece had been based on the concept of citizenship, or to be for capitalism, which in this or that way revolves around the concept of a producer/consumer, is not one and the same thing. Moreover, all of this indicates that we are approaching the moment when exactly these two manifestations of modern human existence, which as a rule pierce and tear apart every modern individuum, will come into a serious conflict.

Another, somewhat more abstract differentiation between democracy and capitalism may be approached using another, let's call it empirical method. Do we not know tens of social systems that are more than anything capitalist and consumer-based, but still do not have anything in common with democracy? In fact, this phenomenon is found on every continent and can be traced through all periods of its modern history. There is no need to go far into the past, recent decades alone offer sufficient empirical proof that our hypothesis about non-concurrence of

democracy and capitalism is true. What else if not a capitalist economy and capitalist social order was and still is the order once instituted by General Pinochet in Chile? There is a series of similar capitalist regimes still functioning in South America and elsewhere, but none of them could be described as democratic. How, really, could one define as democratic a regime that resorts to urban concentration camps and executions, forestalls every possible form of public activity, not to mention political activity? Can we call a military junta democratic? Certainly not! Yet - and this is what I would like to emphasize here - we still do not have any empirical or analytical tool that could be used to define these regimes as anything other than capitalist!

After all, if we take a look at our own backyard and recall the events of the 1990s, we could take Croatia as an example. What else if not capitalism has befallen Croatia? As to the process through which capitalism was introduced in Croatia, the local analysts call it "the robbery of the century" undoubtedly referring to the privatization process which was the vehicle of the most brutal expropriation of the whole society and the country, and the establishment of a "tycoon organization" managed by few hyper-rich families headed by that of the late president himself. What else if not capitalism caused the destruction of rudimentary forms of a welfare state, the elimination of even the most harmless civil initiatives, and the privatization of virtually all social, economic and even political activities, all of which was carried out in the name of the free market, capitalist relationships and private property? Can we say, solely on the basis of "fair" elections and the existence of several political parties, that the presidential regime of General Tudjman in Croatia was democratic?

Of course we could go on with similar examples indefinitely. To many South American, African, and Asian countries may be added many post-socialist countries (for example Ukraine and Belarus) in which capitalism was introduced as if by a decree, but democracy remains nowhere to be seen. It is exactly the dimension of time (the 1990s as the most recent experience) that helps us additionally delimit the difference between capitalism and democracy. From the standpoint of time, little is needed to introduce capitalism: some relatively short period, actually just one moment, or, in some extreme examples, a decree that prescribes the system of private property, private initiative, private appropriation, and a powerful police force (often supported by the army) which keeps a vigilant eye over "free capitalist enterprise" and the "functioning of the free market". From this perspective, that is to say, in terms of possible methods of introducing capitalism, the phenomenon is in fact remarkably similar to socialist revolutions of the past. At the beginning of every capitalism-introduction story is some (peaceful or forcible, parliamentary or other - this is not of decisive importance) "take-over of power", followed by changes in legislation ostensibly in the "economic" spheres of the production and trade, then a more or less forcible expropriation (the change of ownership or of the functioning of ownership and property in general), and finally a more or less despotic control over the development of the process. Everyone who refuses to shut their eyes to the facts will easily see that many post-socialist revolutions are ideal laboratories whose analysis enables a rather precise identification and exposure of the mechanism of the overnight introduction of capitalism.

However, all that we have just said about capitalism (and socialism), or rather about the possibility of its implementation overnight, by no means holds true of democracy! In contrast to material goods, their production and consumption, the fabric of democracy is infinitely more complex. To be more precise, it is like a non-fabric composed of (above all political) relations between people. As we have already suggested, democracy is not about some fundamental non-equality in terms of business between consumers and producers where, by definition, those who



are the most powerful win, but it implies an a priori equality warranted by the constitution and legislation. In contrast to the logic of production/sale that is characteristic of capitalism, democracy does not allow for any kind of victory for the most powerful nor the defeat of the weakest.

Actually, in contrast to capitalism, the democracy is based on the interactive play within the political community (in the sense of *koinonia politike* and not *die politische gemeinschaft*) in which all citizens participate and all guests who, if they do not have "citizen's rights", can derive their "conditional" political stance from the civilian basis of their situation, or, if we formulate this in the fashion of the American revolution, from the area of human rights. A society is therefore democratic only when democracy understood as political equality applies to everyone without exception! On the other hand, every form of discrimination which causes that political equality of even the weakest citizen or non-citizen (usually these are female non-citizens) to be threatened, presents a threat to all, that is to say, the democratic status of the political community in general is threatened. Strictly speaking, "half-democracies" like Croatia, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and similar, in which democracy applies to Croats but not to Serbs, or applies to Serbs but not to Albanians, Slovaks but not Hungarians, Czechs but not Romanians, Poles but not Jews or Russians, are not half-democracies even, but non-democratic regimes! Democracy is actually not the sum total of individuals which may afford to leave out any member of the political community, but it is a qualitative condition of all members which breaks down the moment any political animal (*zoon politikon*) is barred, in any form, from political life which, as a rule, rests on the political and legal equality of all (*isonomy*, as ancient Greeks would put it).

To speak or think in categories where democracy and capitalism are one and the same thing, means to ignore obviously clear empirical facts. Furthermore, to speak or deliberate that capitalism is an indispensable entrance hall to democracy and that it generates democracy through some natural process, is a nonsense. A number of traditional capitalist societies, like for example Italy and Germany in the first third of this century, and of new capitalist systems from the period after the WWII (e.g. Spain and Portugal), even some of the most recent (neo)capitalist (or post-socialist) societies of the Central and Eastern Europe, may serve as empirical proof that there is no natural or safe path from capitalism to democracy.

#### **IV Gatherer mentality**

What have I attempted to suggest in this paper? First of all that the introduction of post-socialist capitalism (neo-capitalism) in Slovenia and other post-socialist countries has not displaced only socialist self-management system but also the democracy and political character of the 1980s (the two are not the same!). This was a decade long process of "substitution", which was carried out in a soft, civilized manner through the joint work of Slovenian liberals (the anti-political center) and the Slovenian right wing. Here it is important to point out that without the dirty and mitigating part played by Slovenian neo-liberals, this process could not have been accomplished without some form of violence. Furthermore, I attempted to suggest that the differentiation between socialism and capitalism anything but coincides with the differentiation between totalitarianism and democracy, as is assumed by many and which is the basis of ideological legitimization of post-socialism, its legitimacy and legality. Capitalism, even post-socialist capitalism, does not carry with it any natural or intrinsic force which would be immanently democratic. Moreover, it is quite the opposite: exactly post-socialist capitalism was the main instrument (even in the liberal version of events) used to deconstruct democracy of the 1980s, and it is also the instrument which, together with chauvinist and neo-conservative right-wing, radically threatens democracy in

general in this part of the world and perhaps other parts as well (globalization). The reasons for this should be sought above all in the fact that capitalism and democracy are two essentially different phenomena (private production and consumption vs. public political action), which are pulling ever wider apart also in post-socialist (neo)liberal capitalisms. NSM and CS activists in Slovenia have been fully aware of this - we were devoted to democracy and not (neo)capitalism. The latter arrived subsequently, it originated from some different ideological world and was assembled by people who did not and do not have anything in common with those of us active in the 1980s.

The most recent problem of Slovenia, Central and Eastern Europe, known as civil society, in my opinion arises from the fact that, with the help of liberalism, civil society was contentedly swallowed by (national) neo-liberal capitalism. Inside this post-socialist commotion can be "happy" only those who think that civil society, democracy and capitalism are in fact "one and the same thing". All others are, if I may slightly invert the words of immortal Marko Breclj , "sober and therefore unhappy". Even though I know that the happy are ever fewer in number, it does not mean that I am optimistic when thinking about conflicts that evolve from the explosive mixture of this "one and the same thing". The simple reason is that the extinguished civil society and the blocked constructivity of the political movements of citizens cannot be awakened or instituted by some decree. Their awakening calls for infinitely more efforts, in fact, for a whole new political generation. But such a generation is nowhere in sight! To put it simply, the conditions for the formation of such generation have disappeared; the very motor of democracy has been destroyed. Along with it disappeared political enthusiasm, willingness to act politically, political behavior itself, the readiness of individuals to expose themselves within the public space and take risk. Our present situation could be described as a relapse into pre-history in the sense that instead of settling the urban areas of political activity for democracy, we moved into some extremely primitive part of a domestic pasture where we formed an "authentic community of gatherers". It is true that instead of collecting the fruits of nature, the produce of nature, modern gatherers are after money. However, does this in fact bring any change into our present gatherer mentality which is as hostile towards democracy, political equality and state governed by law, as a farmer is towards the wolf, bear or fox?